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WHAT IS EPILEPSY?

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Generalized Seizures

Generalized seizures affect both cerebral hemispheres (sides of the brain) from the beginning of the seizure. They produce loss of consciousness, either briefly or for a longer period of time, and are sub-categorized into several major types:



Generalized tonic clonic seizures (grand mal seizures)

Generalized tonic clonic seizures (grand mal seizures) are the most common and best known type of generalized seizure. They begin with stiffening of the limbs (the tonic phase), followed by jerking of the limbs and face (the clonic phase).

During the tonic phase, breathing may decrease or cease altogether, producing cyanosis (blueing) of the lips, nail beds, and face. Breathing typically returns during the clonic (jerking) phase, but it may be irregular. This clonic phase usually lasts less than a minute.

Some people experience only the tonic, or stiffening phase of the seizure; others exhibit only the clonic or jerking movements; still others may have a tonic-clonic-tonic pattern.

Incontinence may occur as a result of the seizure. The tongue or inside of the mouth may be bitten during the episode; breathing afterwards may be noisy and appear to be labored. Contrary to popular belief, nothing should be placed in the mouth during the seizure; turning the patient on one side will help prevent choking and keep the airway clear.

Following the seizure, the patient will be lethargic, possibly confused, and want to sleep. Headache sometimes occurs. Full recovery takes minutes to hours, depending on the individual.



Myoclonic Seizures



Atonic Seizures



Absence Seizures (petit mal)

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